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## 4704.0 - The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, Oct 2010

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### KEY MESSAGES

At the national level for 2005–2007, the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous life expectancy was 11.5 years for males and 9.7 years for females.

Life expectancy at birth for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males is estimated to be 67.2 years, and 72.9 years for females.

This topic provides an overview of estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life expectancy. Data presented are from ABS experimental life tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and provide context for the detailed health and welfare information presented in other topics in this release.

### LIFE EXPECTANCY

Life expectancy is a summary measure of mortality. It represents the estimated number of years a newborn baby would live if current mortality patterns remained constant throughout the baby's lifetime ([see Box 1.7](#)).

At the national level for 2005–2007:

- Life expectancy at birth for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males is estimated to be 67.2 years, 11.5 years less than life expectancy at birth for non-Indigenous males (78.7 years).
- Life expectancy at birth for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females is estimated to be 72.9 years, 9.7 years less than life expectancy at birth for non-Indigenous females (82.6 years).

Life expectancy at birth differs across the states and territories, with the highest life expectancy estimates in New South Wales (69.9 years for males and 75.0 years for females) and lowest in the Northern Territory (61.5 years for males and 69.2 years for females). As shown in table 1.6, differences in life expectancy at birth estimates between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are greatest in the Northern Territory (14.2 years for males and 11.9 years for females) and Western Australia (14.0 years for males and 12.5 years for females), and lowest in New South Wales (8.8 years for males and 7.5 years for females) ([Endnote 1](#)).

**1.6 LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH(a), by Indigenous status—2005–2007**

	Life Expectancy at Birth			Difference Between Non-Indigenous and Indigenous Life Expectancy at Birth(c) years
	Indigenous years	Non-Indigenous years	Total(b) years	
Males				
NSW	69.9	78.7	78.5	8.8
Qld	68.3	78.6	78.4	10.4
WA	65.0	79.0	78.7	14.0
NT	61.5	75.7	72.0	14.2
<b>Aust(d)</b>	<b>67.2</b>	<b>78.7</b>	<b>78.5</b>	<b>11.5</b>
Females				
NSW	75	82.5	82.4	7.5
Qld	73.6	82.5	82.3	8.9
WA	70.4	82.9	82.5	12.5
NT	69.2	81.2	77.6	11.9

- (a) Due to significant changes in methodology, estimates of life expectancy at birth for 2005–2007 are not comparable to previously published estimates.
- (b) Estimates of life expectancy at birth for the total population presented in this publication differ from estimates in ABS 2007, Deaths, Australia, 2006, cat. no. 3302.0. (See: [Endnote 2](#)).
- (c) Differences are based on unrounded estimates.
- (d) Includes all states and territories.
- Source: ABS 2009, [Experimental Life Tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2005–2007](#), cat. no. 3302.0.55.003, ABS, Canberra.

#### Box 1.7: CALCULATING LIFE EXPECTANCY ESTIMATES

Life expectancy estimates refer to the average number of additional years a person of a given age and sex might expect to live if the age/sex-specific death rates for 2005–2007 were to continue throughout his/her lifetime.

As outlined in [Discussion Paper: Assessment of Methods for Developing Life Tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2006](#), the ABS has introduced a new method to produce the 2005–2007 life tables. Based on analysis of the 2006 Census data, the ABS is of the view that previously used indirect demographic methods are no longer suitable for the purpose of compiling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life expectancy estimates.

Consequently the ABS now uses a direct demographic method, which derives life tables for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population by adjusting death registrations data by identification rates obtained from the Census Data Enhancement (CDE) Indigenous Mortality Quality Study.

Life tables for 2005–2007 were compiled on this basis for New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Australia. Due to the small number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory, it is not possible to construct life tables for these jurisdictions.

Due to these changes in methodology, **the ABS strongly advises that comparisons between the estimates presented here and previously published estimates cannot be made.** Differences should not be interpreted as measuring changes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life expectancy over time.

For more information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life expectancy see [ABS 2009, Experimental Life Tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2005–2007](#), cat. no. 3302.0.55.003.

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#### ENDNOTES

- For more recent mortality estimates, see [Mortality](#) topic.
- Estimates presented in this section are derived from abridged life tables with an upper age limit of 85 years and over, using numbers of deaths registered in 2005–2007 and the population as at 30 June 2006, while life expectancy estimates in [Deaths, Australia, 2006](#) (cat. no. 3302.0) are based on complete life tables with an upper age group of 115 years and over, using deaths according to month of occurrence in 2005–2007 and quarterly population estimates. In addition, the graduation processes applied to both sets of life tables differ.

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